

## Imagining the First Christmas

Let's imagine how it would be in Bethlehem that first Christmas, two thousand years ago. At night, the city lies dark and quiet, the stars shining brightly overhead. One star shines brighter than all the rest, a new star which everyone is wondering about. Right under this star, there is a barn behind an inn. And in that barn, Mary and Joseph are trying to rest, far from home. Bethlehem is full of weary travelers because Ceasar has made everyone in the whole country go back to the place they were born to pay taxes.

**ALL SING:** *O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight*

Mary and Joseph have arrived late. They were traveling slowly because Mary is about to have a baby, so when they finally got to Bethlehem, none of the inns had any beds left. But one innkeeper has offered up this barn, where at least the animals will keep them warm and they will have some hay to sleep on. Yet Mary cannot sleep because she feels her baby ready to be born.

**ALL SING:** *Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little lord Jesus lay down His sweet head,  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.*

In the fields, shepherds keep watch, protecting their sheep from danger. They are tired and cold. Suddenly, angels appear to them with glorious light shining all around, and the shepherds are very afraid.

## Imagining the First Christmas

But an angel says, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. You will find the child lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes.”

The shepherds are astounded and go at once to find the baby.

**ALL SING:**

***The First Noel, the Angels did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay  
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!***

When the shepherds come to the place the star has shown them, they find Mary and Joseph with their new baby, joyful and amazed at this Light which has come into the world.

**ALL SING:**

***Silent night, Holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon virgin mother and child,  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.***

***Silent night, Holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar;  
Heavenly hosts sing Aleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born!  
Christ the Savior is born!***

***Silent night, Holy night,  
Son of God, Love's pure Light,  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.***

*Thank you, all, and Merry Christmas!*